

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief John R. Batiste



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State Patrol to Focus on Motorcycle Rider Safety

On Memorial Day weekend, the 2006 motorcycle riding season will be in full swing. With the return of warmer weather, seasonal riders are parking their 4-wheeled vehicles and jumping back onto their bikes. In addition, recent increases in fuel prices have prompted many new riders to take to two wheels.

In the past ten years, motorcycle fatalities have been on a steady upward increase. In 2005, there were 73 motorcycle fatalities in Washington State, up from 35 in 1993, the worst year on record since the motorcycle helmet law was reinstated in 1990.

The majority of motorcycle fatalities are single vehicle incidents. The most frequently occurring collision causes are improper lane travel, rider impairment, speeding and inattention.

Another alarming trend is that motorcycle fatalities have increased at a rate faster than motorcycle registrations. About one third of motorcyclists killed did not have a motorcycle endorsement. In addition, alcohol was a factor in over 40% of fatal motorcycle crashes, more than with any other type of vehicle.

"The Washington State Patrol strictly enforces DUI and driver license laws for all drivers, including motorcyclists," said Chief John R. Batiste. "Riders are strongly encouraged to take an approved motorcycle safety course, get a motorcycle license endorsement, and to never ride after consuming alcohol or drugs."

"Motorcycles are small and can be difficult to see," added Chief Batiste. "We urge all motorists to watch for motorcycles when changing lanes, making left turns and entering the roadway from a driveway or side street."

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